

I CLAIM:

1. A computer device having a memory in which audio or visual content may be stored, the device including software for automatically – without user intervention - analyzing content stored in said memory for plural-bit digital watermark data, and for
5 altering an aspect of the device's operation with respect to said content, in accordance with detection of said watermark data.

2. The computer device of claim 1 in which the content is still image data.

10 3. The computer device of claim 1 in which the memory comprises a clipboard used by the device's operating system.

4. The computer device of claim 1 in which the software alters device operation to signal to a user that a third party has proprietary rights to said content.
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5. The computer device of claim 4 in which the software alters a graphical display presented to the user to alert the user that a third party has proprietary rights to said content.

20 6. The computer device of claim 1 in which the software provides at least some of the digital watermark data to a remote database, resulting in the provision of remote information to the device that controls some aspect of its operation.

7. The computer device of claim 6 in which the information provided to said
25 device includes HTML instructions.

8. The computer device of claim 6 in which the software provides at least some of the digital watermark data to the remote database in response to a user action.

30 9. The computer device of claim 1 in which the software automatically reports detection of at least some of the digital watermark data to a remote computer.

10. The computer device of claim 1 in which the software, upon detection of the watermark data, causes a new box to be displayed on a display screen, the box presenting information to the user.

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11. In a computer device having a memory in which audio or visual content may be stored, an improved method including automatically – without user intervention – analyzing content stored in said memory for plural-bit digital watermark data, and altering an aspect of the device's operation with respect to said content, in accordance with detection of said watermark data.

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12. The method of claim 11 in which the content is still image data.

13. The method of claim 11 in which the memory comprises a clipboard used by the device's operating system.

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14. The method of claim 11 in which said altering comprises altering device operation to signal to a user that a third party has proprietary rights to said content.

15. The method of claim 14 in which said altering comprises altering a graphical display presented to the user to alert the user that a third party has proprietary rights to said content.

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16. The method of claim 11 that includes providing at least some of the digital watermark data to a remote database, resulting in the provision of remote information to the device that controls some aspect of its operation.

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17. The method of claim 16 in which the information provided to said device includes HTML instructions.

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18. The method of claim 16 that includes providing at least some of the digital watermark data to the remote database in response to a user action.

19. The method of claim 11 that includes automatically reporting detection of at
5 least some of the digital watermark data to a remote computer.

20. The method of claim 11 which includes, upon detection of the watermark data, causing a new box to be displayed on a display screen, the box presenting information to the user.

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